



HAMILTON HALL ANTIQUES SHOW

1974

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1974



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Acknowledgements

The Show Committee is grateful to everyone who has helped make this show possible. Particularly to

SAMUEL CHAMBERLAIN for the use of three of his photographs.

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CARL L. CROSSMAN, ERNEST S. DODGE, PHILIP CHADWICK FOSTER SMITH, and WALTER MUIR WHITEHILL for the articles they have contributed.

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ALL THE SPONSORS and PATRONS who have given so generously.

THE ADVERTISERS and CONTRIBUTORS who have made this catalogue possible.

And to all of you who attend this show. Your support is invaluable and assures the success of this annual undertaking benefitting The Peabody Museum of Salem.

FRONT COVER: Pen and Ink drawing of Hamilton Hall, Salem, Massachusetts, by Warren Shreve.

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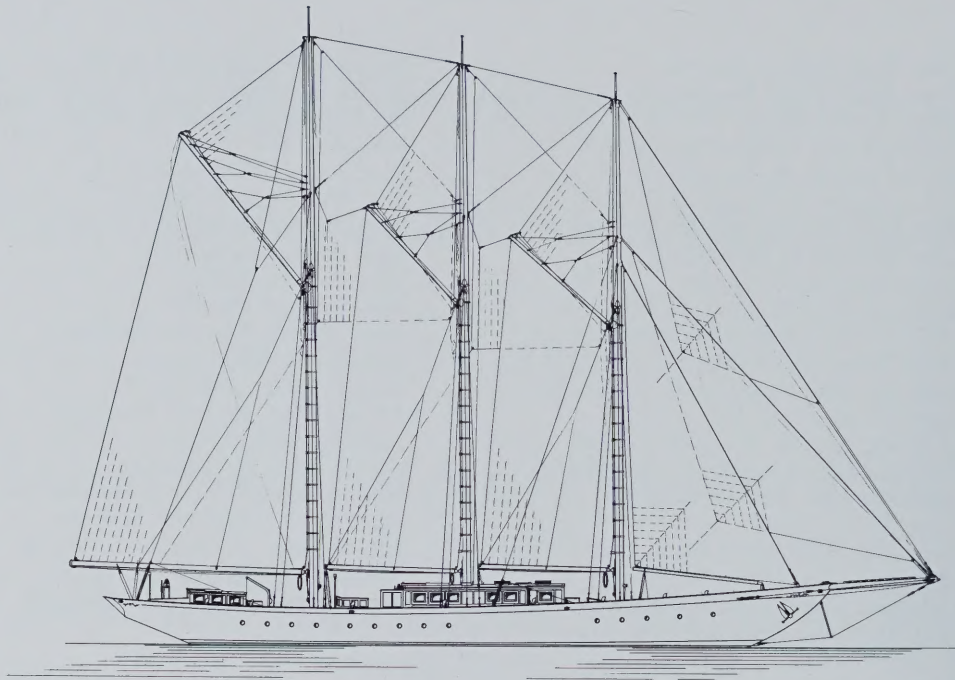
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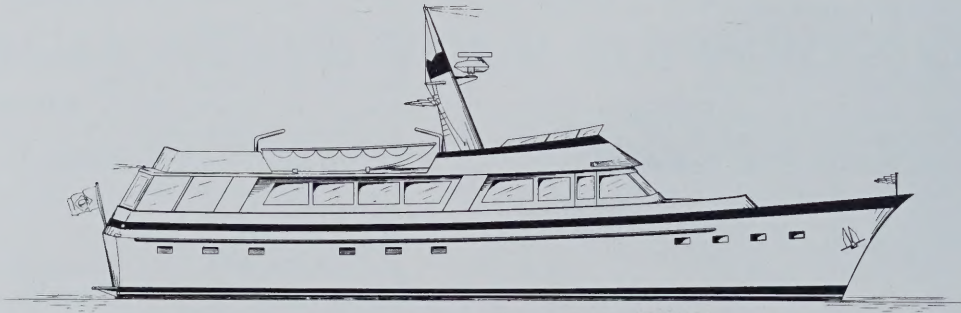
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Hamilton Hall on Chestnut Street, Salem.  
 Photograph courtesy of Samuel Chamberlain

# 1799: Some Observations on Salem

A 175th  
 ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS

by Walter Muir Whitehill

The 1974 Hamilton Hall Antiques Show observes two 175th anniversaries: the founding of the Salem East India Marine Society (of which the Peabody Museum is the successor) and the launching of the frigate *Essex*. The history of the former, I wrote twenty-five years ago on the 150th anniversary; the latter has been admirably described in Philip C. F. Smith's *The Frigate Essex Papers: Building the Salem Frigate 1798-1799*, which the Museum published two months ago. These were important events. The Antiques Show that commemorates them might lead the visitor to think, because of the beauty of objects displayed, that 1799 was a golden year in which people lived decorously, surrounded by beautiful objects. Life, however, has never been all beer and skittles. One discovers that 1799 in Salem was no exception by skimming through the diary of the Reverend William Bentley. He recorded everything, including the New Year's wish of the *Gazette*, which said of Salem:

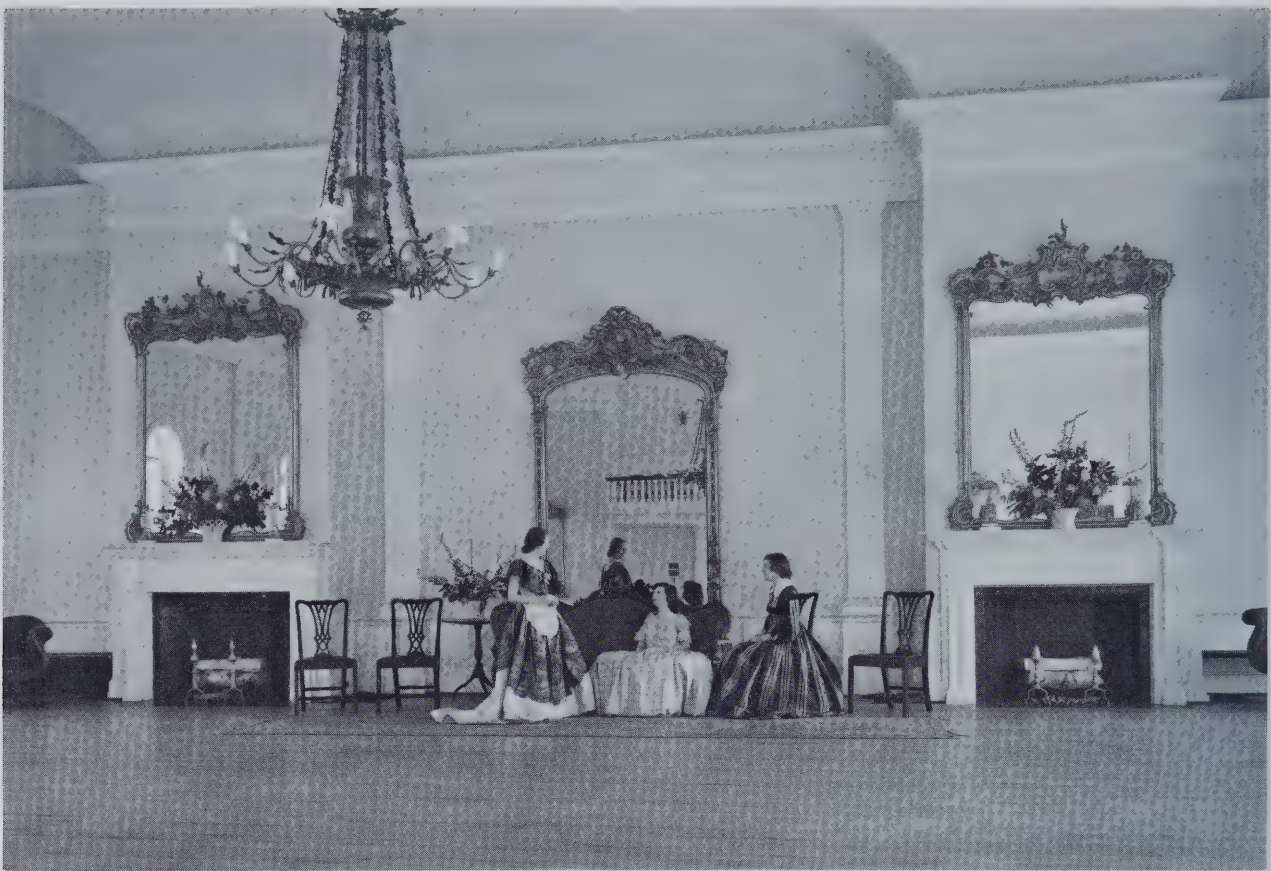
"Tho' often last, she's never least,  
 And fame & fortune to secure  
 Tho' very slow, she's very sure."

The year was in the middle of an undeclared war, which dragged on endlessly. This naval conflict with France had begun early in 1797 and

was not over until late in 1801. The great national tragedy of 1799 was the death of General Washington, the news of which was received in Salem on 23 December. The great loss locally was the death on 8 September of Elias Hasket Derby, "the most eminent merchant that has ever been in Salem." Dr. Bentley, however, recorded other unfortunate events, at both ends of the social scale. The unhappy Anna Wyatt, the passionate and talented daughter of a skipper in the coasting trade, who was "at variance" with his wife, died at Dr. Kittredge's in North Andover on 23 January, leaving two bastards. She sang well and "everywhere her company was desired", but she was seduced by a young man named Bray, "having refused the addresses of a young man of greater industry", was seduced again "by a young carpenter, a stranger & widower", was confined in the workhouse until he would leave town, retired to Andover and died at 33. Then on 18 November Dr. Bentley noted: "Mr. Joseph Cabot, aet. 26, was this day brought to Salem from Boston to be buried. His uncommon intemperance has hastened his ruin. He was thrown into convulsions and died in that state."

Seducations and intemperance were not the only blemishes on life in 1799; students at Har-





Elegant ballroom where Lafayette danced in Hamilton Hall.  
*Photograph courtesy of Samuel Chamberlain*

vard College became hooligans, as they have before and since. On 3 April Dr. Bentley noted: "the Centinel notices the excentricities at the Elections of yesterday. The Students at the Universities huzzaing at the door, the Constables threatened with a prosecution for clearing the house. The Conduct at the College is ridiculous." So many of us thought 170 years later when the S.D.S., abetted by some members of the faculty who should have known better, disturbed the peace of the Harvard Yard. Ten days later "the Centinel entertains us with the zeal of the students of Cambridge to resent their being excluded from the Town meeting by breaking the windows of the last representative."

The "energy crisis" and inflation were anticipated on 7 November when a town meeting was "warned upon the subject of fuel. It is between 6 & 7 Dollars from the Wharfingers. The wood from the country is sold at the same price." At an adjourned town meeting the next day "nothing done about the poor's fuel; few present." There were careless mothers as well, for on 18 December Dr. Bentley reported: "A child from this town going to Andover, suffocated by warm & close cloathing. The same kind of accident on the same spot happened last year."

It was not in Salem but upon Cape Ann that Dr. Bentley in 1799 found a remarkable example

of the liberated woman. On the morning of 14 May, before taking a tour of the cape in a chaise he "stopped in the Harbour to be shaved by a woman named Becky who in due form exercises all the functions of a *Barber*. She has her shop decorated with all the pictures which belong to such places of resort, from the meanest Black print to the best engraving, with all the songs which are in the taste of the varied multitude of her customers. It was a solitary example of a woman in this employment. She shaves well but has few attractions of her sex."

There never was a "golden age" in the past, nor is there ever likely to be one in the future, in spite of the rhetoric of politicians and "do gooders". Mankind is a mixed bag, whose proportions are unlikely to change. But some works of good craftsmanship survive from the past to alleviate the dreariness of the present and offer reasonable inspiration for the future. Some excellent institutions survive, as the Peabody Museum has for 175 years, and even show signs of getting better. So on the Thanksgiving weekend some sensible people will forget about Watergate and the self-righteous rectitude of the media and certain politicians and have a pleasant respite in Hamilton Hall.

Walter Muir Whitehill

*Walter Muir Whitehill is New England's best known historian and has many earned and honorary degrees in that field. Recently retired from the Boston Atheneum where he had been Librarian since 1946, he has long been associated with the Peabody Museum of Salem and is its Historian as well as a Trustee.*



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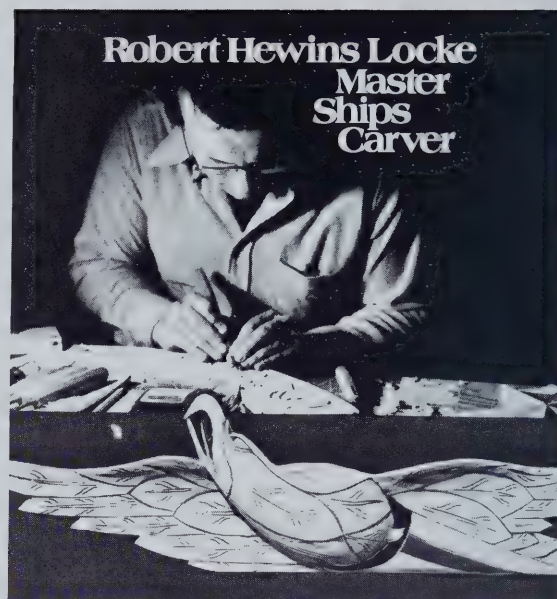
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# Chinoiserie

by ERNEST S. DODGE



Inlaid French cabinet, circa 1780 in the Chinese taste

**C**hinoiserie in Western art and architecture was a fashion inspired by China—a vision of being Chinese without being Chinese. It was the expression of what the West thought the East ought to be. This extraordinary vogue was derived from the descriptions of medieval travellers and the importation of porcelains, silks, bamboo furniture, cloisonné, cottons, and lacquers, and from the accounts of those who accompanied various embassies. From the very beginning of the Eastern trade Chinese artistic and household goods, often made exclusively for the European market, arrived in the West in increasing quantities. With the usual time lag of fashions, the style was as popular in America as in Europe. Chinese Chippendale and other manifestations of the rage graced many a Salem and Boston house.

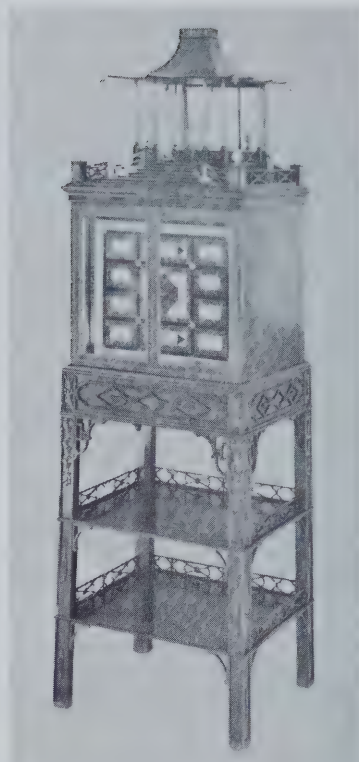
The European mind of the seventeenth century was hopelessly confused about these imports from the East. Only the few Jesuits and traders who

had been in the Orient had the faintest idea where any specific thing came from. Whether the products were Indian, Chinese or Japanese was unknown. Frequently wares took on the name or region of the East from which they were shipped to Europe and that could be a long way from their place or origin. Names became attached to products to which they bore no relation. Even India, China and Japan became confused. Malabar, Coromandel, Malacca, Bantam, and many other names were associated with the Eastern imports becoming so popular, but the geographical location of these places was very vague in the popular mind. All of these names brought visions of exotic lands but few facts. No matter. The furniture, lacquer, porcelain, bamboo work, calicoes, silks, ivory and tortoise shell carvings, and bric-a-brac of all sorts were avidly collected and enormously admired. But there was not enough to go around and it was expensive. It was, therefore, a fashion especially among the wealthy.



The rage increased with the rise in popularity of tea drinking. To supply the demand furniture was japanned, and porcelain, fabrics, and wall paper were all manufactured in the Chinese manner. Chinoiserie, the European interpretation of the presumed Chinese aesthetics became the rage. Not only were Eastern elements incongruously mixed; they were mixed with European elements as well. And while the result was a Western and not a Chinese art form, nevertheless it could never have originated without Oriental, and especially Chinese, influence. Many of the elements were Chinese, but the spirit they expressed was Occidental.

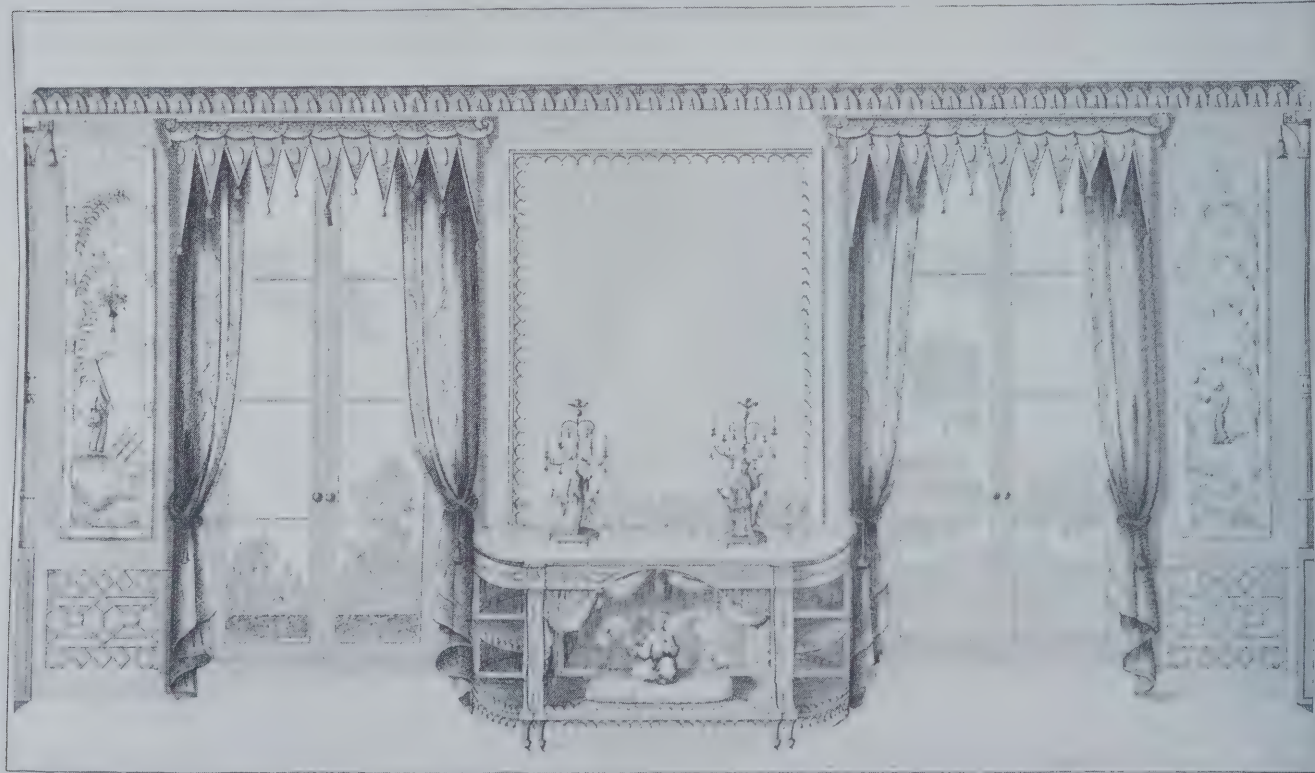
Chinoiserie, beginning about 1600, took many forms and penetrated all the European arts of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Style books of designs and patterns for decoration in the Chinese manner appeared. Manuals and treatises on the art of japanning guided the maker of screens and cabinets. The walls of mansions were graced by Chinese wall paper, the textile factories of England and France produced imitations of Indian and Chinese fabrics, potteries of Germany and Holland manufactured blue and white porcelain in the Oriental manner, and cabinet makers could hardly produce enough lacquered furniture to keep the market supplied. Everywhere were long tailed birds and dragons, little bridges and pigtailed figures, blossoms of Asia, flowering trees and pagodas, golden exotic figures moving through ethereal landscapes against black or colored lacquered surfaces. Some were direct copies of Chinese or Japanese originals, others were the products of inventive imaginations.



Chinoiserie stand for an Oriental box circa 1750 — Victoria and Albert Museum

A VIEW OF THE SOUTH END OF THE PRINCE OF WALES'S CHINESE DRAWING ROOM.

Pl. 51



Published as the Art-Work, by J. Sheraton 1793





Dutch Delft jar in the form of a Chinese vase — circa 1770 — private collection

Spa, in Belgium (near Aix-la-Chapelle), produced famous lacquer work that was amongst the most popular throughout Europe. Japanning in England was applied in a variety of colors besides black. Red and green were popular and yellow, blue, vermillion, and tortoise shell were also used. These were backgrounds for golden mountains, trees, flowers, animals, gardens, and buildings derived from Oriental designs, but very European in appearance. Dragons, camels, and especially monkeys and birds revelled over the lacquer fields among bamboos and blossoms and flowering trees. The kilns of Delft poured forth thousands of blue and white tiles and dishes with Chinese patterns. Chinese tea houses and pagodas graced the gardens of the wealthy and the public parks in Europe's cities. During the nearly two centuries of its popularity chinoiserie changed with the changing styles, emulating both baroque and rococo.

Rococo chinoiserie, even more remotely removed from its Chinese inspiration, began in France during the reign of Louis XV and spread throughout Europe. The Oriental figures and ubiquitous monkeys take on a Gallic gaiety and frolic among latticed pavilions and across little bridges. Entire rooms of chinoiserie with lacquer panelled walls, wall papers, screens, tapestries, furniture, and lesser furnishings came into vogue. In England Thomas Chippendale designed handsome furniture in the Chinese taste. Perhaps the

most elaborate single example of chinoiserie was the entire porcelain room created in Naples in the late 1750s and moved to Capodimonte. Popular acclaim of the style was as enthusiastic in Germany as in France and Italy and even spread to Russia and Scandinavia.

Throughout the last half of the eighteenth century, European and American parks and gardens blossomed with pagodas, tea houses, and Chinese pavilions; with bridges, fishing houses, garden houses, and kiosks; all in bright paint beside little lakes or streams and shaded by weeping willow trees. There were several well-known such gardens around Philadelphia. But nowhere did chinoiserie enter the landscaping of parks and gardens as it did in England. The Anglo-Chinese garden was a wonder of the eighteenth century. The first English chinoiserie garden building, the House of Confucius at Kew Gardens, was erected about 1745 and by the 1750s these whimsical, flimsy, highly ornamental, and gaily painted buildings and bridges were celebrated in books on garden decoration and appearing as bright spots in the gardens and parks of the kingdom.

Culmination of this mode came with the publication of William Chambers' large folio of *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, etc.* in 1757. Chambers had gone to China on an East Indiaman and sketched pagodas and other buildings at Canton. He incorporated his designs, more severe than others, in the famous series of exotic and classical buildings which he designed for Kew Gardens where his great ten story pagoda, the most famous of all eighteenth century garden buildings built in the Chinese manner, still stands. Chambers' book served as an inspiration for architects of garden buildings both in Europe and America. In France the *jardin-anglais-chinois* was enthusiastically adopted and they were frequently more elaborate than in England. By the late eighteenth century the



Blue and white bowl, English, circa 1768, in the Chinese taste



English Chinese garden fad had run its course. The Gothic Revival and the neo-classical movement was crowding chinoiserie from the mansion houses. Few examples of this frivolity survive and it is known largely from literature and engravings in books on garden architecture.

Chinoiserie declined in popularity after 1760 but did not die out for another half-century. During the period of Louis XVI it became rare and rich featuring opulent furniture with Japanese lacquer panels framed and ornamented by ormolu. During the same time in Germany chinoiserie developed a somewhat simpler aspect under neo-classical influence and imitation bamboo furniture was carved out of mahogany. In England there was a brief, but not popular, revival during the Regency where one of the great lavish drawing rooms of the kind was built at Carlton House. Both the Carlton House room and the Royal Pavilion at Brighton excited amused derision rather than wonderment. Special rich and ornate furniture was made for both. Bright Chinese papers covered the walls.

Perhaps the most lasting chinoiserie is the still popular willow ware pattern designed in 1780 and manufactured in large quantities by various porcelain factories, especially Spode. Now (made in Japan) it can be bought in every ten cent store and is even reproduced on paper plates. But in general the ugliness of the Opium War dispelled the romantic Never Never Land of Cathay from Western thought. With the opening of the Treaty Ports travellers in numbers saw mainland China for the first time. Their books describing the barren land and teeming poor people brought home the reality of the East. The vision of the flowering kingdom of Cathay—a land of azaleas and chrysanthemums, of willows and acacias, of dragons and peacocks, of monkeys and little bridges, pagodas and eternal tea drinking from handleless blue and white cups gave way to the China of reality. But even today the wishful thinking of the Western mind loves to again conjure up this picture of a land that never existed.



English commode with Chinoiserie decoration circa 1775 — Osterly Park, England

*Ernest S. Dodge has been Director of the Peabody Museum since 1950. He has had five books published and innumerable articles. This article is an excerpt from his current manuscript, Islands and Empires: European Impact in the Pacific and Far East, soon to be published by the University of Minnesota Press.*



English settee from Ingress Abbey, Kent in the Chinese taste, circa 1750 — Victoria and Albert Museum

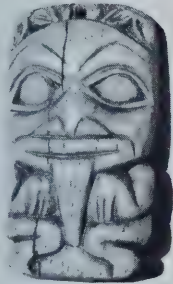
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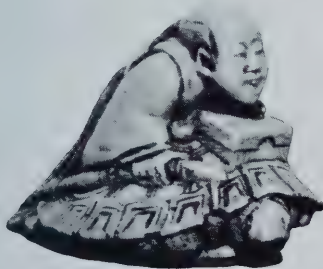
Haida Indian pendant,  
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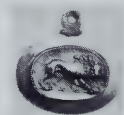
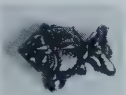


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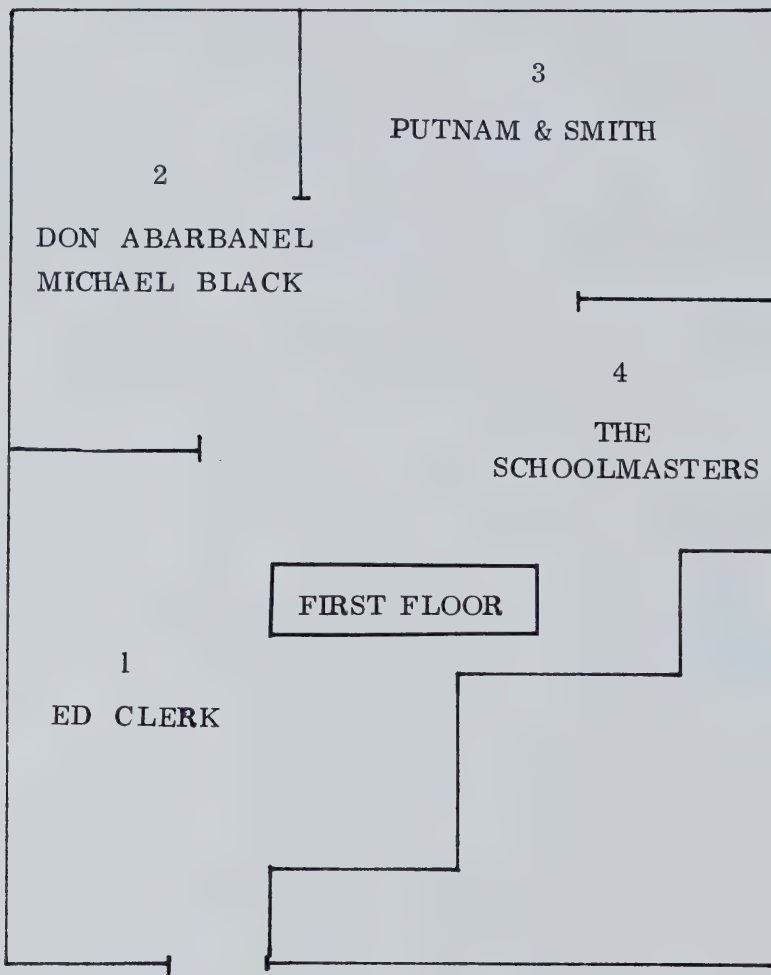


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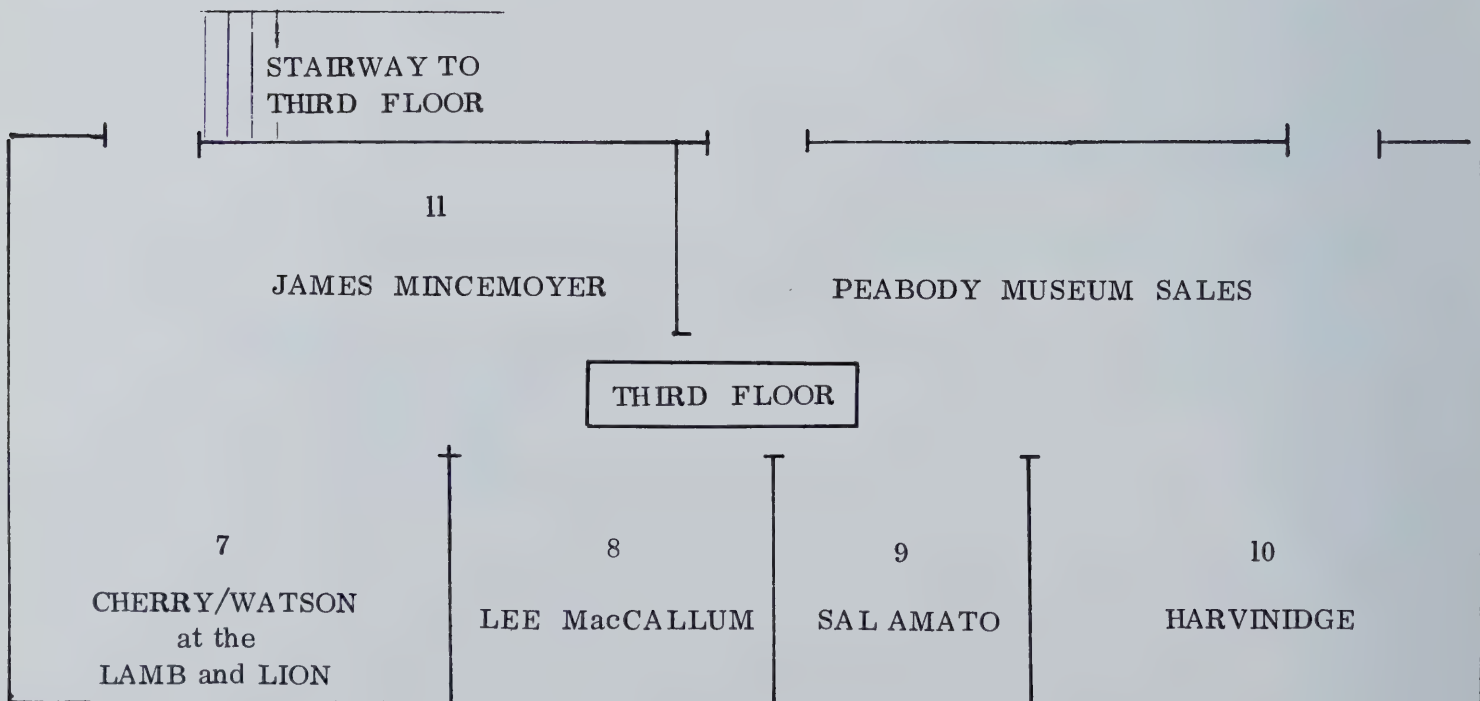
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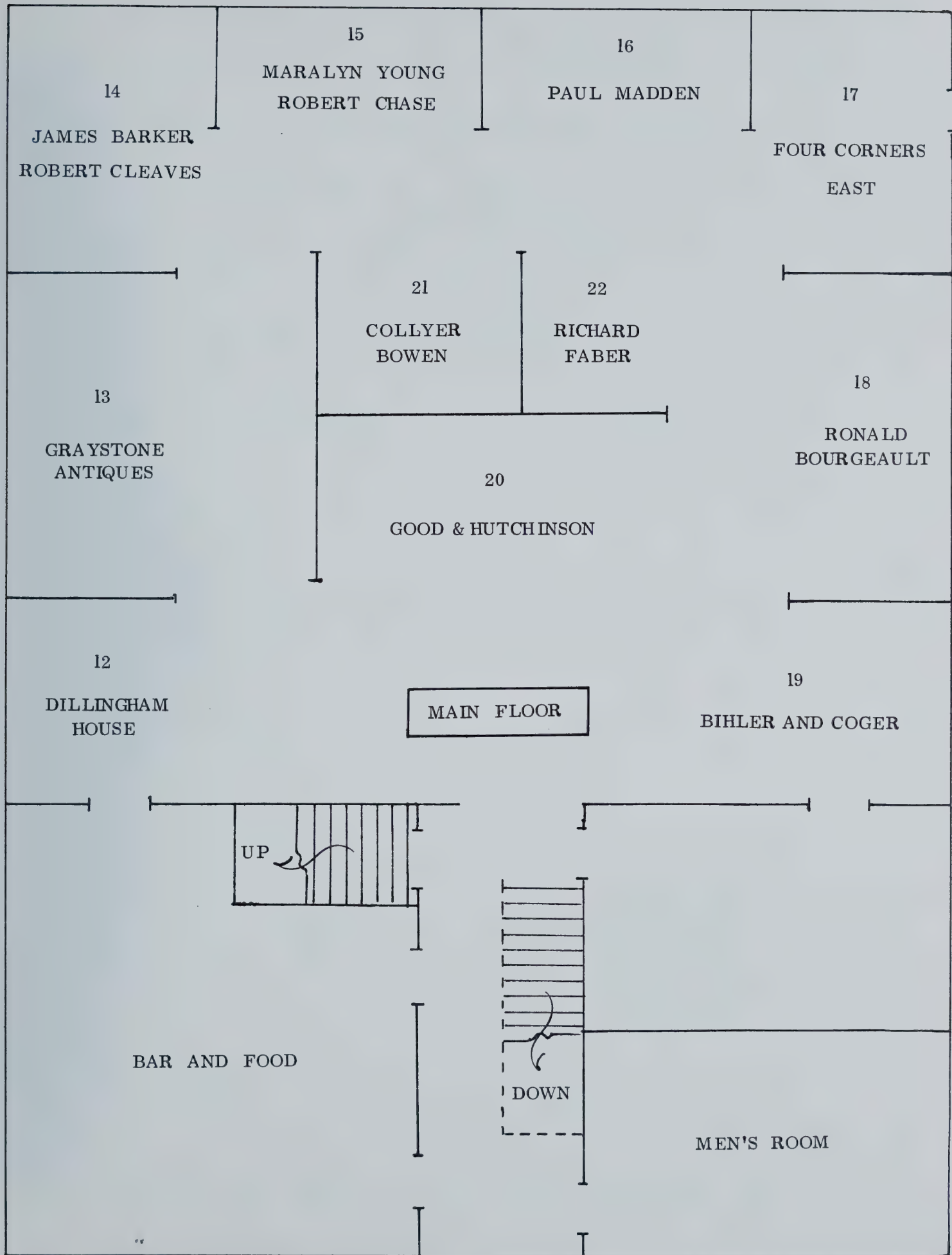
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Japanese export lacquer knife box from the Ship *Franklin* 1799. Other objects brought back from Japan by the Ship *Margaret*, Captain Samuel Derby. Peabody Museum

# EARLY JAPANESE EXPORT WARE IN SALEM

by Carl L. Crossman

One hundred and seventy five years ago, on July 19th, 1799, the year of the founding of the East India Marine Society (now the Peabody Museum), the Ship *Franklin* of Salem, James Devereux Master, sailed into Nagasaki, Japan. Although not the first American ship to enter that port, the *Franklin* was the first vessel to return to this country with a cargo of Japanese goods.

For two centuries previous to this date, the Dutch East India Company had been allowed one trading vessel a year in Japan. Usually sailing from Batavia to Nagasaki, the ship took basic commodities to the Japanese and returned with copper, camphor, trading goods and porcelains and supplies for their installations at Batavia. At the end of the 18th century, with Holland under French rule, problems with the English led the Dutch traders to be more cautious at sea. Fearful of losing their trading charter if a ship did not appear yearly in the Japanese port, the Dutch East India Company resorted to hiring American vessels at Batavia for the voyage, to sail into Nagasaki under a Dutch flag. The first American vessel to make the trip was the *Eliza* of New York, under Captain William Robert Stewart, in 1797 and 1798. The *Eliza* returned



to Batavia in 1797 with the cargo, but the 1798 voyage was a disaster, with the ship being wrecked off Manila. The *Franklin* was chartered in 1799, and James Devereux was given very careful instructions by the Dutch East India Company on the approach and landing in Nagasaki. As the vessel sailed into the harbor, all colors were to be flown, a Dutch flag was to be raised, and a series of four different salutes were to be fired. An appropriate place on the quarter deck was prepared for the arrival of Japanese officials. All monies were to be collected from the crew (money was not used in trading with the Japanese; only goods were exchanged), sealed in a cask, and taken ashore with the Japanese customs officials. This would be returned, with other confiscated goods, upon the ship's departure. All books, especially those of a religious nature, were to be collected, sealed in a cask, and confiscated, since the Japanese feared foreign printed matter. Guns and arms were also sent ashore.

The Dutch arranged for any sick sailors aboard the *Franklin* to be taken to their Dutch hospital at Deshima, a small artificial island in Nagasaki Harbor where the Dutch had established, with Japanese permission, the only Western colony in Japan. This area was even more restricted than Canton, China, and was considerably smaller in size.

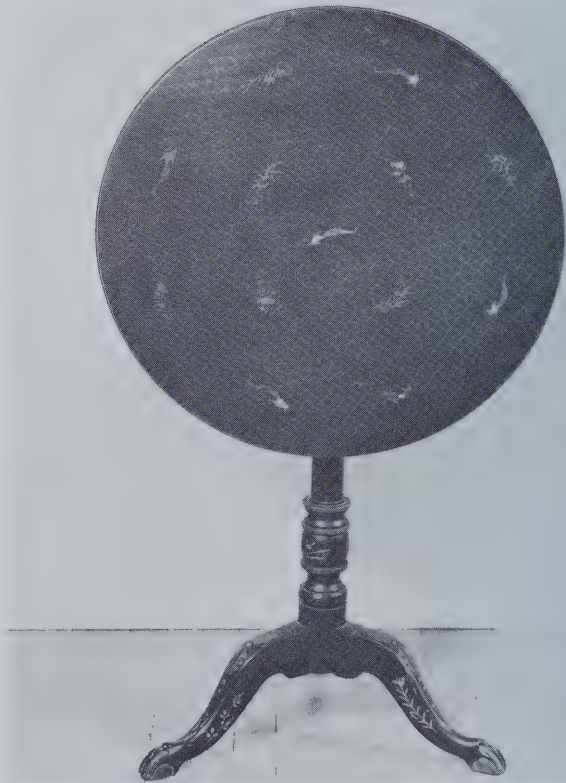


Hepplewhite style Japanese export lacquer card table, brought to Salem by Captain James Devereux aboard the Ship *Franklin*. Peabody Museum

The Dutch East India Company cargo aboard the *Franklin* consisted of: 30,000 lbs cloves in sacks, 6,000 lbs cotton yarn, 2,080 pieces of Chintz, 250,000 lbs. Sugar in Sacks, 20,000 lbs.

tin, 5,000 lbs black peper (sic), 5,000 lbs, Japan Wood, 2,000 lbs Elephant teeth and 100 lbs Mummie, plus four tons of necessities for the company establishment at Nagasaki. For return cargo, Devereux was to bring to Batavia for the Company: 2,500 Cases copper (shipped in small bars), 50,000 lbs. Camphir (camphor), 1,700 empty boxes (?), and 900 boards.

Freight and shipping charges to the Dutch were to be paid to Devereux in: coffee, sugar of the 1st or 2nd quality, cloves, and black pepper; Indigo, Tin, Cinnamon and Nutmeg, if the Company could spare them. Devereux also bought a number of items in Batavia on his own account, with William Burling, his supercargo, to be traded at Nagasaki. Among these items were 42 silver watches, 30 lanthorns, 3½ dozen blue glasses, rattans and oil. These items, and the cargo, were to be sold in a special one day sale arranged by the Japanese, and Japanese goods were to be arranged in return for payment. George Cleveland, in Japan in 1801, describes such a sale: "All these articles were landed on the island, opened and displayed in a ware house, and on certain days the merchants were allowed to go on the Island to examine them. Nothing could exceed the minuteness with which they examined everything . . . They also made drawings of the different description of pieces. After this investigation, they marked on their memorandums the number of the lot and the result of their investigations . . . After the goods had been sufficiently examined a day was appointed for a sale, in the city of Nagasacca (sic) and was conducted with the greatest fairness."



Japanese export lacquer tip top table with mother-of-pearl inlay, brought from Japan by James Devereux. Peabody Museum



It is the Japanese products that Devereux (and other later captains) selected, and which exist today, which are of the greatest interest. These are the first Japanese objects specifically ordered by a Westerner for the American market. Devereux's account book lists the following purchases:

Japan Nov<sup>r</sup> 1799

*Bought of Faeae*

80 Silk Cabboys  
65 d° d°  
50 Setts of Curtains  
128 Rain Coats

*Bought of Schedoia*

68 Lacked Stand tables  
6 d° Card d°  
9 d° Tea Treas

*Bought of Phenoia*

22 Lacked Knife Boxes  
200 d° Oval Waiters  
24 d° Small Round d°  
60 Camphire Plank  
4 Rowls of Chequered Mats  
20 Lacked Writing Dsks  
10 Bagamon Boards  
24 Cabinets  
12 Boxes of Birds  
2 Pairs of Pheasants

It is possible to co-ordinate these accounts with a number of objects given to the East India Marine Society (Peabody Museum) and the Essex Institute of Salem by Devereux and his descendants. The Peabody owns a Hepplewhite-style knife box (ill. 1) a pair of card tables (ill. 2), and a tip top table (one of the 68 Lacked Stand tables) (ill. 3) and a large tray or server (one of the Oval Waiters or Tea Treas). The Essex Institute also has one of the tip top tables. This lacquerware is distinguished by having either a black or bronze colored ground with gold designs and/or mother-of-pearl inlay of birds, and floral sprays. The wood over which the lacquer is applied is of light weight and may well be Japanese Kiri wood. Reverend William Bentley of Salem mentions in his diary seeing the lacquer in Devereux's house shortly after his return from Japan. On June 23, 1800, he writes "At. Capt. Devereux's in Salem, I received such things as he had lately brought from Japan. He is the first person who has made a voyage thither from Salem. He exhibited such things as engaged his attention. The Stone Tables, Tea Tables, Servers, Knife Cases, Small Cabinets, had no other recommendation than the excellent Lacquer gave them. Some were black and the best, others of a shining snuff colour."

The question of the source of the shapes and designs of this earliest export furniture has never been satisfactorily answered. Charles Copeland of Salem, in an article "Japanese Export Furniture" written for *ANTIQUES* in July, 1954, thought that the furniture was copied from pieces on board the *Franklin*. Also, he mentions that he thought this all the more possible since he had not seen export lacquer for the Dutch market. In recent years, this theory has been discarded. The appearance in Holland and England of several items of Japanese export lacquer, in an earlier style than the *Franklin* pieces, indicates that it was indeed an often exported commodity.

A knife box in Japanese lacquer with applied gold landscape scenes and Chippendale-style ball and claw feet, owned by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, can be tentatively dated around 1770. A similar box, of a similar period, found in Wiltshire, England but now owned in Boston, illustrates the shape is not unique (ill. 4). A number of other pieces exist which are most certainly for the Dutch market. The most ambitious is a superb three-drawer cylinder top writing desk in the neo-classical taste. The desk is decorated with slanting bands of alternating black and bronze lacquer, with gold and mother-of-pearl designs of birds and floral sprays. The retractable cylinder is decorated with a raised Japanese landscape similar to that on the earlier Chippendale-style knife boxes. The short legs are fluted and surmounted with an oval fluted fan of inlaid mother-of-pearl, similar to the satinwood inlay that would be found on a Western desk of this type. The hardware is of copper and white copper, or tombac (a combination of copper, tin, zinc, and arsenic) and is in both the Japanese and Western taste. The pulls and hinges of the inside compartments of the desk are Japanese in inspiration, while the pulls, bail handles and drawer escutcheons are in the European style. This desk would seem to precede the *Franklin* lacquerware.



Japanese export lacquer knife box, circa 1770 in the Chippendale style.  
Privately owned

A number of compartmented boxes, tea caddies and writing desks have been located with Dutch (or Western) town views on their lids and tops (ill. 5). These views are either painted in gold or are of black drawing over pieces of mother-of-pearl. The source for the designs are Dutch landscape prints which were common in the Orient, since so many of them were the sources for designs on Chinese export porcelain.





Japanese export lacquer tea caddy with inlaid mother-of-pearl and Dutch town view in gilt. Privately owned

A tip top table, similar to those from the *Franklin* has a Dutch town view with the name *Softerwoude* in gilt lettering. This table would indicate the form was well-known to the makers of Japanese export furniture and it seems doubtful if the form could have been taken from any piece of furniture aboard the *Franklin*. Copeland felt these tables to have been badly copied from sketches or designs done by the Japanese, or from a poor example of the form aboard the vessel; however this type of base, with the rather simple and plain interpretation of a ball and claw foot, also appears in China trade and native market Chinese furniture. When one recalls early Chinese paintings of Chinese garden scenes and interiors using similar kinds of tables, it would seem far more likely the Japanese are copying an Oriental form rather than a Western one.

The Western furniture being copied in lacquer by the Japanese cabinetmakers could well have been in Batavia and taken to Japan at any time in the 18th century. It is far more likely the *Franklin* lacquer was made from furniture already known to the Japanese than from an item on board the *Franklin* (unless it could have been one particularly desired object) since the order was completed in only four months.

A possible source for the Hepplewhite style furniture brought back on the *Franklin* could well have been Salem made furniture. Records and accounts for a voyage of the *Franklin* in 1803, bound for Batavia, four years after her trip to Japan, is particularly revealing. A group of Salem cabinetmakers, including Nehemiah Adams, William Appleton, Josiah Austin and the Sandersons had formed a group sending their furniture aboard Salem vessels for sale in such ports as Cape Town, South Africa and Isle of France. The superb labeled Nehemiah Adams secretary-bookcase now at Winterthur Museum was indeed found in Cape Town. The *Franklin* in 1803 had a considerable quantity of this "venture cargo". The accounts for the trip have in-

voices with Adams, Austin and Appleton for a large number of pieces of fine furniture. The Appleton invoice is particularly revealing, stating: "Invoice of eight cases of furniture shipped on board the Ship Franklin James Devereux Master bound to Batavia . . ." Since American vessels had been going to Batavia since the late 1780's there is no reason to assume that an earlier load of Salem venture cargo had not already been sent there.

Supporting this idea to some degree is the existence of a superb Sheraton-style knife urn in Japanese lacquer with mother-of-pearl and gilt decoration (ill. 6). The urn seems to have been copied from one very similar to the John Derby knife urns at Winterthur Museum. Where the vertical inlaid bandings are of satinwood on the Derby urns, they are of mother-of-pearl on the Japanese. If Derby's urns were of Salem manufacture, they could well be from the same cabinetmaker whose venture cargo could possibly have reached Batavia and Japan and been the source for the lacquer urn. The possibility is also very real that the urn was taken from a drawing book or an English example. Interestingly, John Derby was one of the owners of the Ship *Margaret*, the second Salem vessel to go to Nagasaki, in 1801.



Japanese export lacquer knife urn in the Sheraton style, decorated in gold and inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

Author's collection

The *Margaret* was owned by John Derby, Benjamin Pickman and Samuel Derby, the latter being the ship's captain. The vessel sailed for Batavia in 1801 and there met the *Franklin*. The *Margaret* was chartered by the Dutch East India Company for the trip to Japan, and a journal kept by George Cleveland carefully details the journey, trading, and Japanese customs. Cleve-



land was the brother of William Cleveland, who had sailed to Nagasaki the previous year on the Boston Ship *Massachusetts*. George Cleveland's description of the arrival of the products they had obtained in trading is fascinating: "As the time was approaching for our departure, we began to receive our returns from the interior, brought many hundred miles. These consisted of the most beautiful lacquered ware, such as waiters, writing desks, tea caddies, knife boxes, tables, etc., etc. These were packed in boxes so neat, that in any other country they would be considered cabinet work. We also received a great variety of silks, fans in great quantities, a great variety of porcelain, and house brooms of superior quality".

A number of items from this important voyage were given to the East India Marine Society by Samuel Derby. The original catalogue for the Museum of 1821 lists the following:

- 260 A small portable clay furnace, used in Japan to heat water for making tea, etc.
- 261-263 Small clay tea-kettles adapted to the furnace
- 262 A Japan tea pot beautifully enamelled
- 264, 265 Two Tea-cannisters, containing Tea, from Japan
- 266 A fan, for kindling fire, made of feathers
- 267-272 Cups and Saucers from Japan
- 273 A small Mirror, made of Tombac, or white copper, from Japan

- 274 A small hand Mirror
- 276 A Smoking Apparatus from Japan
- 277 An Inkstand and sand-box
- 278 A small Keg, made of blue glass
- 279 A small glass dish, with an enamelled figure of a lobster lying in it, curiously executed. (see ills. 1 and 7 for items 260, 261-263, 262, 264, 265, 266, 267-272, 273, 276).

These objects exist today, and give an excellent idea of the type of small object being brought from Japan by an American trader in the very first period of contact. If these items were found out of historical context, with no connection with any of the traders aboard vessels to Japan, they would be virtually impossible to identify and date. A small furry animal (ill. 1) given to the Museum in 1886 by a Derby descendant, and known to have come on the *Margaret* ties in closely with Bentley's description of such animals seen at Devereux's on his visit: "The imitation of animals for toys were as good as hair could make them, but have their best effect by Candle light . . . The monkeys, dogs, mice, etc, were capable of answering their intent wonderfully".

Derby also gave the East India Marine Society "an elegant sword from Japan with gold ornaments the blade of Wootz or Damascene steel" and "A Model of a pleasure boat of Japan". George Cleveland presented "A Razor from Jap-



Japanese export objects brought from Japan by Captain Samuel Derby in 1801. Peabody Museum



an." These are unlocated today. A table given to the Essex Institute recently by a Derby descendant is very like the *Franklin* lacquer and must have been one of the ones George Cleveland mentions seeing coming on board. A large compartmented box at the Peabody is also from the *Margaret* and comes from a Derby descendant. An important tray with a view of the Dutch settlement at Deshima in inlaid mother-of-pearl (ill. 7) is accessioned as being from the *Margaret* also.

Scholars have long wondered why the early traders did not bring home native Chinese scrolls, ancient bronzes or antique porcelains. Probably they were totally unavailable to the Western trading community at Canton. Some merchants did mention seeing this type of thing in the residences of the wealthy Chinese merchants, but also stated that it was unavailable for them to purchase. Likewise, it has been assumed that the first Japanese woodblock prints were brought back in the post-Perry period by scholars and collectors such as Morse, Fenollosa and Weld. Interestingly, the first prints seem to have been brought to Salem, by James Devereux, since entries 538-542 in the East India Marine Society catalogue list: "Japanese coloured prints". Although now unlocated, a later re-cataloguing of one print gives a further description "Coloured costume Print of a Prostitute". Undoubtedly this refers to a colored woodblock print by an artist such as Utamaro, who recorded the life of the famous courtesans and their activities in the Yoshiwara district of Tokyo. Bentley mentions paintings at Devereux's: "The paintings were totally destitute of perspective" but it is unknown whether these are scrolls, prints or indeed oil on canvas paintings like the early China trade paintings.

Americans may well have been familiar with Japanese export goods well before the first American vessel made the trip to Nagasaki. American vessels were constantly at Batavia and therefore able to purchase Japanese goods from the Dutch. It is well known that Chinese export porcelains, silks and other objects were in America throughout the 18th century; trading goods of all types came to this country through Dutch and English ships.

A Japanese export lacquer cigar box, with a fine masonic decoration in gilt and mother-of-pearl on the lid, supports this theory of early Japanese trade goods in America (ill. 8). In color and design very much like the lacquer discussed above, the box contains a note attested to in Boston in 1835 and reads in part: "This segar box was given to Genl Stevens of New York—a revolutionary Officer, by Genl George Washington commander in chief of the American Armies of our revolution . . ." The remainder of the note traces the progression of the gift to the owner of 1835, who is giving it to his son. The documentation seems indisputable. Since Washington died in 1799, before the return of the *Franklin* from Japan, the box must have come to America on an American vessel from Batavia or from a Dutch or English vessel from Holland. The box is one of the only documented items that can be proven to have been in this country before direct American contact with Japan.

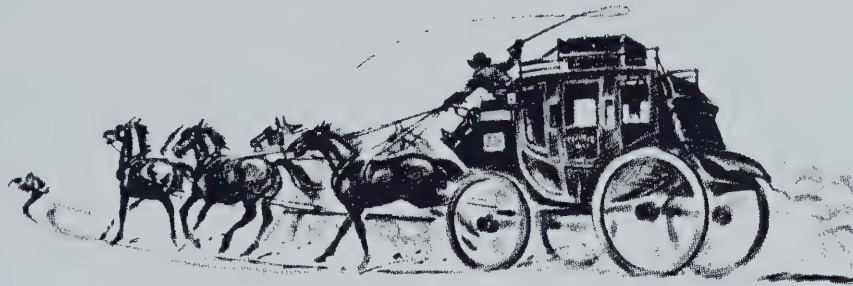


Japanese export lacquer cigar box with masonic decoration, given by George Washington to one of his generals, before 1799. Privately owned

Because of the *Franklin* and *Margaret* trips to Japan, there must have been a large number of Japanese export items in Salem in the early 19th century, which must have raised considerable interest among the trading community. Japan had been a remote and closed country, and the stories and objects brought back were doubtlessly subjects of intense curiosity. It is hoped that this article will stir a renewed interest in early Japanese items for the American market, and that more of the objects from these first American vessels to Japan will be found and identified.

*Carl L. Crossman is President of Childs Gallery, Boston, which deals in major American and European paintings, prints, and drawings. Mr. Crossman's specialty is The American China Trade. A seasoned speaker, he is also a regular contributor to Antiques Magazine. His most recent book is The China Trade: Export Paintings, Furniture, Silver and Other Objects published by the Pyne Press.*

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# ESSEX: The Salem Frigate

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By Philip Chadwick Foster Smith

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In mid-December 1799, not quite three months after she was launched from Winter Island, Salem, the United States frigate *Essex* went into commission, and, in accordance with her first sailing orders, rendezvoused with another frigate at Newport, Rhode Island, to take under convoy any American merchant ships that cared to avail themselves of an escort from Newport to the faraway island of Java.

American trade with ports east of the Cape of Good Hope had grown steadily since the end of the American Revolution; by 1799, in fact, over ninety shipmasters from Salem alone had navigated the waters beyond the Cape. When the Secretary of the Navy issued his orders to the *Essex* there were then a number of vessels readying for further East India voyages, yet in Salem the merchants displayed a singular lack of enthusiasm for his scheme. The sea risk of sending a vessel around Cape Cod to Newport in the winter, they calculated, equalled the risk of capture between Salem and the Cape of Good Hope. Even though they had just financed the construction of the *Essex* to help safeguard American commerce, they were convinced in this case that a well-appointed vessel stood the best chance of completing the voyage on her own.

It was such hardheaded, supremely practical decisions that had preserved many a vessel and many a venture during the highly unsettled decade of the 1790s. These same unstable years, nevertheless, had led ultimately to the construction of "The Salem Frigate".

From the end of the Revolutionary War until well into the 1790s, no United States Navy

existed to protect American shipping from spoliations abroad. It was therefore incumbent upon both the ship owner in planning a voyage and the shipmaster in prosecuting it to maintain a sensitive flexibility; to weave a successful course through the constantly shifting labyrinth of foreign blockades, decrees, and sanctions; to outwit piratical cruisers wherever found; and to walk a thin neutral line between the ancient animosities of Britain and France. During the nineties, English and French depredations upon American shipping occasioned acute alarm as well as widespread financial loss within the mercantile community.

A brief flurry of excitement in 1794, caused by the unwelcome appearance of Algerine corsairs in the open Atlantic, prompted Congress to authorize the construction of six frigates, but when peace was concluded with the Dey soon afterwards the naval momentum very nearly ground to a halt. Only the gradual deterioration of relations with the French throughout the last half of the decade and the beginning of a three-year undeclared naval war with France in 1798 generated the awakening of the United States Navy and brought about the construction of the frigate *Essex*.

The "Navy" in the first months of 1798 consisted only of the frigates *United States*, *Constitution*, and *Constellation*. None of these would be ready for sea before late June. What was needed was more ships—a lot more ships—and as quickly as possible. One way a government strapped for ready cash could acquire the requisite number was to encourage the merchants of the



principal seaports to build ships of war on their own, loan the same to Government, and then receive six percent interest on the amounts subscribed.

The merchants of five seaports—Boston, Charleston, New York, Philadelphia, and Salem—would build large “subscription” frigates for the Navy. Others, such as Baltimore and Newburyport, would provide ships of lesser rate. Salem was among the last to make the commitment, but once the decision had been made would pursue the endeavor with uncommon zeal; what is especially remarkable is that a town of less than 9,500 men, women, and children could or would undertake to produce a frigate of greater dimensions and superior firepower than any other subscription ship save those built at New York and Philadelphia.

A subscription paper was opened in Salem on 16 July 1798, but it came to nothing, for the firm of George Crowninshield & Sons, mistaking the intent of the various Congressional authorizations, was attempting to press as loans upon the government its own ships *America* and *Belisarius*. Those other merchants, such as William Gray, Jr.,

Elias Hasket Derby, or John Norris, who could pledge the large sums so essential to attract a sufficiency of smaller offerings had no reason to exhibit their generosity so long as other arrangements may have been afoot. At length, the Crowninshields withdrew, and a second subscription was attempted in mid-September. Within a month, \$74,700 lay pledged upon the paper, and the subscribers had met in a body to elect a Frigate Committee to carry their wishes into effect.

Summoned to Salem as designer and Constructor of the ship was William Hackett of Salisbury, whose work on the Revolutionary War vessels *Tyrannicide*, *Ranger*, *America*, and *Alliance* was well known. While Hackett drafted the ship, the Committee chose Enos Briggs, one of the three master shipwrights then operating Salem yards, to build her; between them, they selected as the place of construction a beach and sloping meadow on the Winter Island peninsula at the mouth of the harbor. None of the established shipyards in Salem commanded sufficient depth of water to assure an unimpeded launching. An entirely new one had to be created for this single purpose.



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**Y**E Sons of Freedom ! all true lovers of the Liberty of your Country ! step forth, and give your assistance in building the Frigate, to oppose French insolence and piracy. Let every man in possession of a *White Oak Tree*, be ambitious to be foremost in hurrying down the timber to Salem, and fill the complement wanting, where the noble structure is to be fabricated, to maintain your rights upon the Seas, and make the name of America respected among the nations of the world. Your largest and longest trees are wanted, and the arms of them for Knees and Riving Timber. Four trees are wanted for the Keel, which all together will measure 146 feet in length, and hew 16 inches square. Please to call on the Subscriber, who wants to make contracts for large or small quantities, as may suit best, and will pay the **READY CASH.**

**ENOS BRIGGS.**

SALEM, NOV. 23, 1798.

Enos Briggs' advertisement for timber, as it appeared in the *Salem Gazette* of 23 November 1798.

Briggs immediately began to advertise for oak timber from the adjacent country towns of Essex County. Within a month, aided by the heavy snowfalls which made for good sledding of the trees to Salem, he had an ample supply, and his men were hard at work in a rented sail loft getting out the ship's molds. At the same time, Committee-member Ichabod Nichols was contracting for rough spars, he was negotiating with sparmakers in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and he was sounding out Paul Revere in Boston to determine whether or not Revere could supply the ship's copper fastenings and castings.

By mid-February 1799, the day-to-day logistics of construction and the smooth flow of supplies had become so complex as to cause the Secretary of the Navy to appoint Captain Joseph Waters Navy Agent in charge. Negotiating contracts, as well as keeping on top of the tradesmen, soon absorbed his complete attention—anchors from Nathan Read's Iron Factory in Danvers, sailcloth from the Salem Duck Manufactory on Broad Street and sails from Buffum & Howard, shot from Benjamin Seymour of Plymouth, decorative carvings from Samuel McIntire, rigging by McClennan & Sanders of Boston, headsetting by the Richardsons of Boston, copper sheathing and munitions from the Navy Department, cordage from the Salem ropewalks of Joseph Vincent, Thomas Briggs, and Jonathan Haraden.

On Saturday, 13 April 1799, the keel for the frigate *Essex* was laid on Winter Island. One hundred and forty-five working days later, she was launched into her native element. The logistics of her construction and the participation of the people who built her is the subject of the author's book, *The Frigate Essex Papers: Building the Salem Frigate, 1798-1799*, published by the Peabody Museum of Salem this year, 1974, to commemorate the 175th anniversaries of the launching of the *Essex* and of the establishment of the museum. From this book, we reproduce here excerpts from the chapter describing the launching:

\* \* \*

"The Launching of the Frigate," wrote [Salem's Reverend William] Bentley in his diary on 30 September 1799. "Everything was in full preparation. The morning gun [at Fort William] was fired & nothing then remained to be done but to prepare the tallow, drive the wedges, remove the blocks & let her go." The footloose and keenest to witness the last-minute preparations began early in the morning to make their way toward the shipyard, where Enos Briggs and his men already had been out in force for a number of hours with a contingent of the riggers standing by to assist. By mid-morning, a converging stream of pedestrians, horsemen, wagons, and carriages coming up Derby Street and from the direction of the Common had begun to cause a



U.S. Frigate ESSEX, built on Winter Island, Salem, 175 years ago in 1799. Watercolor by Joseph Howard, c. 1802, in the Peabody Museum of Salem.



bottleneck at Neck Gate, through which the road continued on toward the Winter Island causeway. At the side of Derby Street, where the harbor came up nearly to the road, the wharves were nearly awash from the rising tide; in the end, late comers found themselves sloshing along portions of the street where the abnormally high spring tide was flooding it. The concourse of people, horses, and vehicles was tremendous. The whole town, it seemed, as well as huge numbers of people from the outlying communities, was pouring up Salem Neck to the shipyard—twelve thousand people, it was estimated, witnessed the launch of the *Essex* from Winter Island.

Some elected to avoid the crush further on by posting themselves along the adjacent shore on Salem Neck. Others, crammed into rowing craft, moses boats, and small sailing boats, stationed themselves off the shipyard cove, well out of the *Essex*'s line of descent but close enough inshore to garner a good view. A few idled away the time before the midday hour to set a scrap of lugsail and to sail back and forth across the mouth of the harbor, while across it, on the Marblehead side, ant-like figures could be seen amassing on Naugus Head. . . . Salem was never to witness such a spectacle again.

Two-thirds of the way along the length of Winter Island from the causeway, the road suddenly forked at a gently sloping hill; the track on the right led up the hill to the head of Winter Island Wharf, where piles of kentledge not yet put aboard still lay stacked, and the well-worn road to the left descended down to Fort William, its ramparts thick with spectators. Beyond the fork and just over a rise, past the jumbled disarray of the shipyard itself, lay the *Essex*, her main and fore yards temporarily stepped as flag-staffs with oversized flags displayed conspicuously upon them and her decks inhabited by the men who intended to take the plunge with her. On her right were the quarter-dollar seats, rising up from the beach on a rocky outcropping of a steep little hill and up the meadow. Within, a section had been reserved for the distinguished members of the Frigate Committee and their guests. Above, ranged around the hills, were mounted the ship's cannon, each attended by a gunner with linstock in hand.

Judging from the painting of another Salem launching—none exists for the *Essex*—the sexes were inclined to drift apart at such affairs; the ladies in their long frocks, shawls, and bonnets, carrying infants and talking volubly amongst themselves; the men bunched together in solemn conversation, while the boys wormed their way forward to the center of activity and got underfoot wherever a hapless workman was attempting to get on with his job.

Precisely at noon, Briggs' men went to work. People had come to expect him to stage a good show, for nothing could be more disappointing and anticlimatic than if the ship should stick on the ways. He would not disappoint them. An unnatural hush fell across the yard in a wave as the carpenters began to "drive the wedges, remove the blocks & let her go." The hull began to tremble gently and to creep almost impercep-

tibly, until, with a final splintering crack of wood and a groan, she began to move. Then, just as the men were jumping clear, twelve thousand voices bellowed as one: "There she goes!!" Everyone was on his feet by now, whether he knew it or not, the women pointing excitedly and the men cheering wildly and thrashing their hats about in the air. With a small puff of bluish smoke from the ways where the tallow had ignited, a rumbling dash into a cataract of seething water, a dip, and a bobbing, the *Essex* steadied in the harbor waves and the deed was done. The shouting crowd was worked into a frenzy of excitement; foolish grins, moist eyes, and a deal of back-slapping were in evidence on all sides as the guns on the hills began to boom out a Federal salute and an armed vessel in the harbor returned it, gun for gun.

. . . As Briggs' gang gained control of the *Essex* to bring her up to her moorings, the vast assembly on Winter Island began to disperse back across the causeway. . . . A fair number of people—those who had subscribed or had done work for her—remained behind after the multitude had slowly departed. By order of the Committee, Enos Briggs had arranged for a post-launching feed. . . . It seems to have been a gala affair—punch, hot buttered rum, slabs of beef and tongues, bread and cheese and biscuits, and puddings to finish it off.

Afterwards, those revelers as yet unsatisfied repaired downtown to Webb's Tavern to continue the convivial atmosphere for another few hours. Paul Revere, who had come down from Boston to witness the launch, became so upswept in the gaiety of the occasion that he forgot to give Enos Briggs the rudder chain key he had lugged to Salem with him, but instead left it behind in "Capt Webb's barr room."



*Philip Chadwick Foster Smith joined the staff of the Peabody Museum of Salem in 1963. He has been Curator of Maritime History since 1966 and from the January 1969 issue has been Managing Editor of THE AMERICAN NEPTUNE, a quarterly journal of maritime history published by the museum.*



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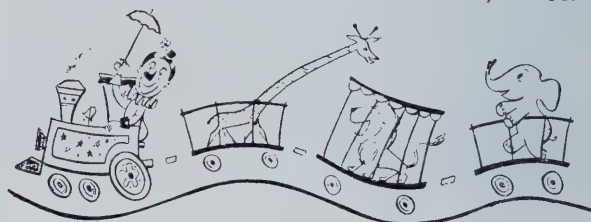
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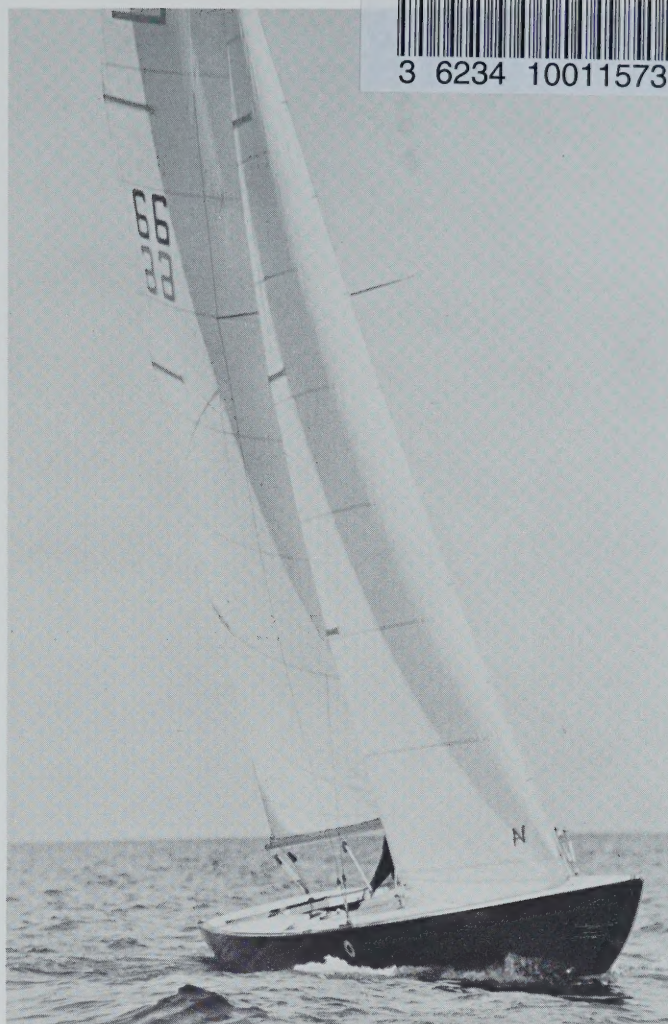
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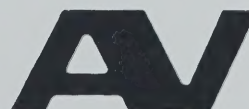


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